

**“The Way Through” (Third in the series “The Way”)**

**Psalm 32:1-11; Romans 5:1-11**

**March 8, 2026 (Third Sunday in Lent)**

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**Denbigh United Presbyterian Church**

Psalm 32:1-11

Happy are those whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered. Happy are those to whom the Lord imputes no iniquity, and in whose spirit there is no deceit.

While I kept silence, my body wasted away through my groaning all day long. For day and night your hand was heavy upon me; my strength was dried up as by the heat of summer. Then I acknowledged my sin to you, and I did not hide my iniquity; I said, “I will confess my transgressions to the Lord,” and you forgave the guilt of my sin. Therefore let all who are faithful offer prayer to you; at a time of distress, the rush of mighty waters shall not reach them. You are a hiding place for me; you preserve me from trouble; you surround me with glad cries of deliverance.

I will instruct you and teach you the way you should go; I will counsel you with my eye upon you.

Do not be like a horse or a mule, without understanding, whose temper must be curbed with bit and bridle, else it will not stay near you. Many are the torments of the wicked, but steadfast love surrounds those who trust in the Lord. Be glad in the Lord and rejoice, O righteous, and shout for joy, all you upright in heart.

Romans 5:1-11

Therefore, since we are justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have obtained access to this grace in which we stand; and we boast in our hope of sharing the glory of God.

And not only that, but we also boast in our sufferings, knowing that suffering produces endurance, and endurance produces character, and character produces hope, and hope does not disappoint us, because God’s love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit that has been given to us.

For while we were still weak, at the right time Christ died for the ungodly. Indeed, rarely will anyone die for a righteous person—though perhaps for a good person someone might actually dare to die. But God proves his love for us in that while we still were sinners Christ died for us.

Much more surely then, now that we have been justified by his blood, will we be saved through him from the wrath of God. For if while we were enemies, we were reconciled to God through the death of his Son, much more surely, having been reconciled, will we be saved by his life. But more than that, we even boast in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received reconciliation.

### Sermon

Many of you have heard me speak about the process of grief, primarily at funerals and graveside services. Frequently, I share a children's book called *Going on a Bear Hunt* to illustrate some of what I have experienced and have watched others experience when facing grief.

In the book a dad and his children are embarking on a journey – they are going on a Bear Hunt. The family encounters various obstacles along the way. At each obstacle, the father speaks these words. **“You can't go over it. You can't go under it. You can't go around it. You've got to go THROUGH it.”** Grief is a lot like this. You can't go over it. You can't go under it. You can't go around it. You've got to go through it. If you don't “go through it,” there's generally an emotional and sometimes physical price to be paid.

Despite the repeated words in the children's story concerning the bear hunt; namely, “We're not scared,” they were scared and so are we when it comes to facing grief, especially when our grief is over the sins we've committed. It can be difficult to face our wrongdoings and sins and to walk through the process of acknowledging our sin, repenting of our sin, and accepting forgiveness for our sin. Some of us carry our sins like stones in our backpacks. They become “too heavy to carry, too real to hide, and too deep to undo.”

In Psalm 32 the writer says: “While I kept silence, my body wasted away through my groaning all day long. For day and night your hand was heavy upon me; my strength was dried up as by the heat of summer.” “When I kept it all inside, my bones turned to powder, my words became daylong groans.” (*The Message*)  
His sin and guilt were: “Too, heavy to carry, too real to hide, and too deep to undo.”

Finally, the writer of Psalm 32 says that he realized “he couldn't go over it, under it, around it.” He had to walk through it. He says, “Then I acknowledged my sin to you, and I did not hide my iniquity; I said, ‘I will confess my transgressions to the Lord,’ and you forgave the guilt of my

sin.” What a relief. The load is lighter. God’s forgiveness, when we accept it, sets us free and brings us joy. Another translation says: “Count yourself lucky, how happy you must be – you get a fresh start, your slate’s wiped clean. Count yourself lucky – God holds nothing against you and you’re holding nothing back from him.”

It’s interesting that the Psalmist goes on to say: “Do not be like a horse or a mule, without understanding, whose temper must be curbed with a bit and bridle, else it will not stay near you.” “Don’t be ornery like a horse or mule that needs bit and bridle to stay on track.” (*The Message*) It seems the writer of this Psalm knew himself and us pretty well. We certainly can be ornery, needing all the help we can get to stay on track and to acknowledge when we’ve gotten off track.

The “Way Through” such acknowledgements about ourselves is difficult. We’d like to go around it and make excuses for ourselves. We’d like to go over it by denying our sin. We’d like to go under it and hide our sin. But the only way of healing, release, and forgiveness is to go through it – to acknowledge, to repent, to receive forgiveness, and to live in that grace.

The way that we are able to go “through it” is because Christ went through the agony of the cross for us. Christ did this for us before we cleaned up our act or repented of our sin. “For while we were still weak, at the right time Christ died for the ungodly. . . God proves his love for us in that while we still were sinners Christ died for us.”

One scholar put it this way: “Paul writes that we have a God who loves us. God loves us so much that, even when we were (and are) weak; even while we were (and are) sinners; even when we were (and are) enemies of God, and each other, God sent God’s son. We have a faithful God who was and is willing to go to any length to reconcile us. (Lucy Lind Hogan, WP, March 2017)

How then do we live as those reconciled to God? How do we in turn seek reconciliation with others when our sin and/or theirs has caused anger and estrangement? We have a faithful God who was and is willing to go to any lengths to reconcile us? To what lengths are we willing to go to reconcile with others? And, I think it’s appropriate to ask if there are any lengths – any attempts at reconciliation with another person – that might not be healthy?

I think there are some extreme circumstances where we are not humanly able to pursue the type of reconciliation God is able to accomplish.

In many of our situations, however, we can pursue reconciliation. We can try to forgive. We remember that “God proves his love for us in that while we still were sinners Christ died for us.” We remember that God pursued us while we were his enemies and reconciled us to himself through the death of his son Jesus. We didn’t have to say we were sorry before Christ died for us. We didn’t have to get ourselves together and stop sinning before Christ died for us. While we were sinners and while we still are, Christ died for us.

Reconciliation with others requires going “through it” – through the conflict, through the tough conversations, through the pain. But if that sounds like too much, let us remember what Jesus went through to reconcile us to God.

You can’t go over it, you can’t go under it, you can’t go around it. You’ve got to go through it. Jesus will walk beside us every step of the way.